

**TESTIMONY OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

**BEFORE THE JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON INLAND FISHERIES AND
WILDLIFE**

IN OPPOSITION TO L.D. 608

“Resolve, to Improve Outcomes for Participants in the Antlerless Deer Permit Lottery”

SPONSORED BY: Representative LANDRY of Farmington.

CO-SPONSORED BY: Senator BLACK of Franklin
Representative WOOD of Greene, Representative BLIER of Buxton, Representative
CAMPBELL of Orrington, Representative HEPLER of Woolwich, Representative
O’CONNELL of Brewer, Representative PLUECKER of Warren, Representative SOBOLESKI
of Phillips, Representative THERIAULT of Fort Kent, Representative THORNE of Carmel

DATE OF HEARING: March 13, 2023

Good afternoon Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry, and members of the Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Committee. I am Nate Webb, Wildlife Division Director at the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, speaking on behalf of the Department in opposition to **L.D. 608**.

This resolve requires the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to change the department's antlerless deer permit lottery to allow an applicant whose name is drawn to be assigned to another wildlife management district if the applicant's first choices of district have already been assigned. It directs the department to model the changes on the relevant procedures of the department's moose public chance drawing.

In 2022, we introduced a suite of changes to the way we regulate the harvest of antlerless deer. These changes were designed to improve our ability to meet doe harvest objectives by making the harvest of antlerless deer a more attractive option and by trying to get permits into the hands of hunters that are more likely to use them. One change made during this process was to reduce the number of Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) a hunter may select when applying for their permit from 3 down to 2. When selecting WMDs for their permit, a hunter is essentially ranking the WMDs in which they are most likely to want to use their permit, formerly from 1 to 3 and now from 1 to 2. By removing the option to select a 3rd WMD, we eliminated the least

attractive hunter choice and improved the likelihood that if selected for a permit, it would be in an area that the hunter was more likely to want to harvest an antlerless deer. This bill would not only revert that change but go a step further by allocating a permit to hunters for an area they did not select at all rather than geographically nearby. We feel this approach will lead many hunters to accept a permit in an area they are relatively unlikely to hunt. In doing so, we would decrease our ability to achieve doe harvest objectives except by issuing more permits, which would be a return to issues experienced previously with our deer permit system that we were trying to correct with the changes implemented in 2022.

I would be glad to answer any questions at this time or during the work session.